DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 061 587 EA 004 163

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TITLE	Educational Administration: Changing Conditions, Demands, Insights and Concepts.
PUB DATE	13 Feb 72
NOTE	11p.; Speech given before American Association of School Administrators Annual Convention (104th, Atlantic City, New Jersey, February 13, 1972)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Changing Attitudes; *Educational Administration; Educational Change; *Educational Objectives; *Educational Planning; Educational Policy; *Social Change; Speeches; State Action; State Departments of Education

ABSTRACT

This speech discusses important issues to be considered by educational administrators in arriving at "an operating consensus" on major purposes and goals for education in a complex, pluralistic, and rapidly changing society. The author suggests that educators and lay citizens be concerned with probable developments and needs during the coming years. He also emphasizes the need for long-range comprehensive planning, calls for an understanding of the change processes and the forces that tend to facilitate or retard needed changes in society and in education, and urges that educators identify and eliminate inequities and injustices in educational systems before courts take action. (JF)

ED 061587

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EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION: CHANGING CONDITIONS, DEMANDS, INSIGHTS AND CONCEPTS*

I assume everyone participating in this discussion will agree with the trite statement that these are unusually difficult but challenging times not only for education but also for all who are concerned with or involved in education. In an article in the October 1971 PTA Magazine James E. Allen, former U. S. Commissioner of Education, commented: "We are facing not only a crisis in public confidence in the current school system and its operation

but a crisis of confidence in education itself," and are "troubled by doubts as to whether we can ever develop a formal educational process that realizes the full power and potential of education." Dr. Allen observed that we have the capability to make our schools more responsive to the needs, but concluded: "What is justifiably in doubt...is our will to accomplish this aim," partly because of the continuing uncertainty and confusion about what should be done.

In this complex, pluralistic and rapidly changing society it would be unrealistic to assume that complete agreement on the purposes and goals of education can ever be attained. Moreover, if any such agreement were possible at any given time it would soon be dissipated because of the changing conditions, expectations and values of the millions of people who are concerned. We can and must, however, seek and find effective ways of arriving at what has been called "an operating consensus" at least on major purposes

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*Prepared by Edgar L. Morphet, Director, Improving State Leadership in Education, for presentation at AASA Committee for the Advancement of School Administration Seminar, Atlantic City, N. J., February 13, 1972.

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and goals. Failure to do so can only result in further controversy, confusion and even chaos that could destroy the educational system and perhaps eventually the nation.

Furthermore, we must recognize that merely developing beautifully worded statements of what we believe about education that seem to be accepted by educators and leading lay citizens will not meet the needs. For example, for many years we have said we believe in equality of educational opportunities for students and equity for taxpayers who support the schools, but the evidence shows clearly that we have not even closely approached either equality or equity. As Willis Harman has pointed out, this dangerous gap between <u>what we say we believe and what we actually do</u> leads to frustration and disillusionment, dilutes our will to accomplish purposes, and can no longer be ignored. One major objective of the Committee for the Advancement of School Administration should be to cooperate in finding ways to eliminate such indefensible gaps.

FUTURE ORIENTATION

At the same time we attempt to identify and resolve present problems and needs, both educators and lay citizens must be concerned with probable developments and needs during the coming years. Many of the young people who are now in school or who will begin their formal educational careers in the next few years will help to shape the destiny of the nation during the latter part of the present and the early part of the next century. What occurs, or does not occur in education in the immediate future, therefore, is of vital importance. Decisions that should be made promptly must not be postponed until what many would consider to be a more propitious time. Neither the assumption that present problems must be resolved

before any attention can be given to the future, nor that attempts to predict the future are futile, is defensible. Some schools and colleges have already begun to utilize forecasts of alternative futures as a basis for helping their students not only to consider the implications for themselves and society of various alternatives, but also to study present problems from a different perspective. A major challenge to the AASA Committee for the Advancement of School Administration and to all other educational leaders seems to be to develop, and help those with whom they are associated to develop, a defensible future orientation and, at the same time, to face realistically the many current problems in or relating to education.

SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

There have been some important changes in education during recent years and most of these have brought about some urgently needed improvements. Many of these changes, however, have resulted from decisions relating to certain aspects of education (such as components of the curriculum, personnel or finance) without adequate consideration of other related aspects from a long-range point of view. Most state and local school systems have been so locked into and concerned with pressing problems, including the traditional annual or biennial budgetary requirements, that relatively little attention has been given to the development of comprehensive long-range plans for the improvement of all aspects of education. While the latter concept has been widely discussed in many school systems, far too few school systems have developed and begun to implement a defensible plan for planning, and even fewer have developed comprehensive long-range plans that are realistic. Some of the retarding

factors are: (1) the scarcity of people who understand and have the competencies needed to deal effectively with the planning processes; (2) other pressing demands on the resources; and (3) many influential people who fail to distinguish between a planning society and a planned society and believe that any serious planning may eventually lead to a planned society.

As Jack Culbertson* has noted, but many people have failed to recognize, there are two major kinds of planning, each of which has a different purpose: strategic planning and management planning. Strategic planning should receive major emphasis in education because it is concerned with the determination of policies and the establishment of goals and objectives. Management planning, which is just as essential, is concerned primarily with the efficient attainment of goals and objectives that have already been agreed upon.

Both kinds of planning require not only the services of competent experts but also the intelligent participation of potentially concerned people to help to ensure that the plans will be accepted and can be implemented. The bona fide participation of well informed lay citizens is especially important in strategic planning because any new or reoriented goals proposed are more likely to be accepted and supported by the legislature, other agencies of government and the public in general if their representatives have had an opportunity to understand the need and help with the development of the proposals. This procedure should be considered part of the process

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*Jack A. Culbertson et al, The Simulation of an Urban School System (Columbus, Ohio, UCEA, 1971).

of developing the will that is so essential to ensure that the goals are effectively implemented. Moreover, if properly utilized, this process should help to get agreement on policies and procedures for assessing needs, on priorities, on the strategies to be utilized (after considering the implications of various feasible alternatives for attaining the goals), and on the most appropriate procedures for evaluating progress.

Unfortunately comparatively few educational leaders, perhaps either because of deficiencies in their preparation programs or partly as a result of many other pressures and demands on their time, have made effective use of the participatory process in planning. Far too many state and local school systems have tended to rely primarily on studies by outside experts to get the job done. In my opinion, this Committee, many colleges and universities, and state and local educational leaders throughout the nation urgently need to reconsider the role and relations of planning experts, of other educators, of students, and of representative lay citizens in planning and effecting needed changes in education at all levels.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF CHANGE*

Every educator needs to understand the change processes and the forces and factors that tend to facilitate or to retard needed changes in society and in education. If any institution or agency fails to meet the needs of a changing society, it will sooner or later be modified or replaced. Education, that is basic to the self-renewal

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*See, for example, Edgar L. Morphet, David L. Jesser and Arthur P. Ludka, Planning and Providing for Excellence in Education (Denver, Colorado: Improving State Leadership in Education, 1971), Part Three.

and improvement of any modern society, must continually be modified to meet emerging needs. Although education has changed--often on a piecemeal or a cut and patch basis--most people apparently have been convinced that more carefully planned basic changes are needed in state and local organization and operation, in the curriculum and instructional procedures, in provisions for financial support and accountability, and in many other respects. The failure of many schools and educational institutions to meet numerous clearly recognized needs has obviously contributed to the present "crisis in confidence" in education that will not be resolved until at least the most urgently needed changes are made.

But most social organizations including school systems tend to resist major changes, primarily because many members feel secure in continuing with the roles to which they have been accustomed and would be insecure in a different or unknown role. Thus, many parents whose children seem to be doing well in school and educators who believe they have been successful in one kind of position or setting tend to resist any major change unless they are convinced that the change is essential or would help to bring about needed improvements. People, therefore, are more likely to cooperate in effecting a proposed change in education when they have had an opportunity to participate in studying the problems and needs and in deciding what is to be done to resolve them, than when an attempt is made to impose a change by law, by board action, or by administrative directive.

Since many important changes must be made in education in the near future, it seems essential that leading lay citizens and educational leaders at all levels make a more serious effort than ever before to help other laymen and educators to understand the problems

and process of change, the need for and advantages of proposed changes, and to find appropriate ways to involve them meaningfully in planning and effecting promptly the improvements that are so essential in education.

COURT DECISIONS AND LEGAL PROVISIONS

It seems evident that unless the citizens of each state and local school system proceed promptly to identify and eliminate the most important inequities and injustices in the provisions for education, the courts will increasingly attempt to do so. This does not necessarily mean that the courts will have access to all of the pertinent information or should be expected to have the wisdom needed to propose the best solution for difficult and complex problems, but rather that they will act or require appropriate action if the legislature, school boards or the people fail to meet their responsibilities.

Although the courts some years ago began to take steps to identify and safeguard the rights of students and others who are involved in or concerned with education, more recent decisions relating to inequities for taxpayers and inequalities of opportunities for students guaranteed by indefensible state laws, supplemented by other decisions relating to unrealistic and indefensible district boundaries, have shaken many people out of their previous complacency about such matters. It seems evident that most states must now become seriously concerned with studies in these areas, but there is considerable doubt as to whether some of them will seek appropriate long-range solutions on the basis of what is already known or will accept some expedient proposal relating to an alternative that has previously been found to be less defensible than some others.

In some states the laws seem to have been designed to make it difficult or impossible for local school systems to adopt any important new policy or practice unless it has been specifically authorized by law. Such limiting provisions tend to discourage needed changes and should no longer be considered appropriate. In every state such handicapping or restrictive provisions should be identified and eliminated. A major legislative objective in every state should be to encourage carefully planned improvements in education, rather than to discourage or prevent needed changes.

Educational and lay leaders in every state need to make every reasonable effort to develop and implement defensible policies and provisions for the improvement of education and thereby eliminate the current danger that the courts or the legislature will arbitrarily establish educational policies that should be determined by state or local boards of education.

RECONSIDERATION OF STATE, LOCAL AND FEDERAL ROLES

As the states and the Federal government provide an increasing proportion of the funds needed for support of schools from non property tax sources--which is essential under modern conditions--there will undoubtedly be many controversies relating to the amount and kinds of control each level of government should have in or over education. Most people still accept "local control" of education as a valid political slogan, even though such control has become relatively meaningless in most states. A more realistic term to use under present conditions would be local responsibility for education which is viable and appropriate but, for many reasons, has been denied to, or seriously eroded in, many local school systems. The basic issue now seems to be: What responsibilities for education

should be assumed by each level of government? All leaders in education and government urgently need to help to clarify the pertinent issues and agree on an appropriate division and delineation of responsibilities. I propose that one criterion for resolving some of these issues should be: The responsibility for the kinds of decisions that can best and most effectively be made at any level or by any component of education should be clearly assigned to that level or component which should be held accountable for all such decisions. A few suggestions are given below for consideration.

The state should assume the leadership in:

- Getting agreement on state goals for education that are consistent with national goals and appropriate to the educational needs of the citizens;
- Developing comprehensive long-range plans for the improvement of all aspects of education including the reorganization and decentralization of districts, the pre- and in-service preparation of personnel, the curriculum and instruction (including the environment for learning), and special services, housing and financial support;
- Providing for the storage, retrieval and dissemination of information through an adequate communications network;
- Developing guidelines and procedures relating to accountability;
- Developing proposals for legislation including the identification and elimination of restrictive laws; and
- Providing, from non property tax sources, a major portion of the funds needed for the support of education and ensuring that these funds are apportioned on a basis that will enable each local school system to meet the educational needs of all students.

Every local school system should:

- Develop, with appropriate assistance, and implement adequate long-range plans and priorities for the improvement of education;

- Develop and seek agreement on appropriate local supplementary goals for education;
- Select, assign and seek to improve continuously the personnel needed to serve the students in the system;
- Develop its own budget including provisions for the effective utilization of supplementary local funds as well as funds from state and federal sources;
- Seek to find and utilize meaningful ways of involving the community and other appropriate agencies in improving the educational program including the environment for learning;
- Cooperate with the state education agency and other appropriate groups in proposing and effecting improvements in laws and policies; and
- Develop and utilize appropriate procedures for evaluating and reporting on progress in improving education.

The Federal Government should:

- Encourage the states to become seriously involved in comprehensive long-range planning and assist them in other appropriate ways to improve education; and
- Provide to the states on an equitable basis, a substantial portion (probably at least one-third) of the funds needed for the support of education.

PREPARATION AND ROLE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS

The preparation of educational leaders including teachers should be considered a cooperative enterprise. Although the colleges and universities should assume the primary responsibility for the initial preparation, states and local school systems should cooperate in

determining the basic policies which should include provision for appropriate background, theory, research and practical applications.

The preparation programs seldom, if ever, can be satisfactorily conducted on a university campus on the assumption that what is learned there can be utilized successfully once the traditional requirements for a degree have been met. University professors and students who expect to work with or serve in the field need to learn how to work effectively with people on practical problems that can be dealt with satisfactorily only in the state, local or national situation in which the problems exist. Moreover, even the research training and experiences of many students should be concerned with practical problems that are consistent with a design developed by a competent representative group or groups to encourage studies that will contribute significantly to the improvement of education.

There seems to be little doubt that present and future educational administrators will need to become bona fide <u>leaders</u> who can and will help, and seek the cooperation of other educators and lay citizens in helping, to identify and highlight present and emerging educational problems and needs and contribute significantly to their prompt and satisfactory solution from a long-range point of view.